

CONTRACT TO ASSESS THE EVALUATIONS OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME “TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE” PREPARED SO FAR, AND THEIR IMPACTS AND EFFECT ON THE OPTA IMPLEMENTATION

MANAGERIAL SUMMARY

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The evaluation focused on the recommendations following from the completed OPTA evaluations, their quality and benefit for the evaluation location of the Managing Authority for the Technical Assistance Operational Programme, and for the operational programme itself. The quality of the evaluation capacity, both internal and external, has also been verified. The evaluation has also proposed a set of recommendations to increase the efficiency and quality of the MA OPTA centre.

MA OPTA carried out 6 evaluations within the current programme period, one of which was internal (*OPTA publicity evaluation: The awareness about OPTA among the implementation structure bodies and the recipients*). The external evaluations focused on the areas of the programme management and the relevant following partial areas (*Creation of a basis for the report on the system of implementation of the Operational Programme Technical Assistance, Study of the monitoring system evaluation, Evaluation of the absorption capacity within the Operational Programme Technical Assistance, Evaluation of the Indicator System within the Operational Programme Technical Assistance, Mid-term progress evaluation within the Operational Programme Technical Assistance*). In total, there were 112 recommendations made in the evaluations, the largest part of which concerned the areas of project preparation and provision of sufficient absorption capacity (22%) and increase of programme effectiveness (21%).

Based on the completed analysis it can be summarized that the completed evaluations had a positive effect on the programme implementation and achievement of its goals, while only two of the applied recommendations have been proven ineffective. The evaluation has also shown that 90 % of the recommendations met the basic requirements of the contracting authority. Nonetheless, the final impacts of the recommendations on the quality of using the funds within the OPTA can be described as indirect.

It has transpired that concreteness and clarity (understandability) of the recommendations differed as regards their material focus and in particular they were influenced by the general quality of the individual evaluations. We can state that the quality of the recommendations, with the exception of those relating to the two problematic evaluations, was consistent with the character of their material focus (e.g. the indicator-relating recommendations were more specific than those on setting of the implementation itself). However, the recommendations were not always formulated, with the exception of the OPTA Mid-term progress evaluation, in the required detail, and in particular references to the completed analyses were missing.

Practicability of the recommendations can be described as relatively high (amounting to almost 80%), although considerable room still exists for further improvement of their quality. The impracticability of the recommendations is largely due to the aforementioned unsatisfactory reasons given for the individual recommendations, i.e. their insufficient support by the completed analysis. It has also been proved that the MA OPTA has incorporated most of the practicable recommendations. It is essential that the contracting authority always formulates the tender conditions and scope of evaluation in such a manner so that the evaluator is obliged, and has sufficient room, to verify the facts concerned in the depth consistent with the asked evaluation questions. It can be stated that the outputs from the evaluations – except for the Evaluation of the monitoring system, which had a greater number of shortcomings identified – basically matched the relevant allocations (in the project budget). Therefore it must be emphasized that in the case of an allocation increase (and the related possibility of selecting a reliable author), better results could be possibly achieved, as a

number of the identified issues are due to just the inadequately supported and drafted analytical part.

It can be stated based on the evaluation of quality of the completed evaluations that the evaluation capacity of MA OPTA must be further extended/improved. This recommendation involves capacity both with regard to provision of external evaluations and creation of internal evaluations. The offer of expert and evaluation services in the Czech Republic provides a satisfactory quality and the increase in quality regarding the evaluation studies can to a large degree be achieved through changes in the formulation of the selection criteria for suppliers. The practice in other EU member states speaks in favour of this argument, as well as the recommendation of the EC, which recommends a significant increase of the quality assessment share in the price-quality ratio (to 70 %). Also the following factors will contribute to further quality improvement: long-term partner collaboration between the contracting authority and potential suppliers, creation and publication of an evaluation strategy and evaluation plan of the programme and openness of the MA when organizing seminars, working groups or meetings toward external evaluators.

It can be stated that the external evaluations generally provide a greater potential of added value and quality as compared to those prepared internally, which has also been proven for the OPTA evaluations. The basic condition for using this potential, and at the same time reaching the set goals, is to select a high quality supplier and set the evaluation correctly. The scope and precision of formulation of the requirements on contract performance are key. Internal evaluations can then be recommended in particular (only) for short-term examinations and analyses that are less demanding in terms of time and staff and necessary to complete in a short period of time.

The created evaluation has also shown that it is essential to focus, in the case of MA OPTA, on improving the internal evaluation capacity with an emphasis on the awarding of evaluations and in particular the formulation of contractual documentation. To improve the quality of the internal evaluation capacity, further specification of the system of sponsors for individual evaluations, appointment of the “general” and “subject matter” sponsors and defining of their collaboration can be recommended, specifically since the initial stage of formulating the evaluation specification. It is only in this way that the needed management and coordination of evaluation can be ensured, along with tying the evaluation outputs with their practical use. At the same time it can be recommended that the worker in charge of evaluations gains the needed professional grasp of evaluation-related problems, in particular regarding evaluation methods (e.g. attending specialist trainings/seminars).

Recommendations - Summary

Based on the analysis undertaken within the project, several recommendations can be made to further improve the quality of preparation and performance of evaluations within OPTA. The recommendation summary is included in the table below. Overall, it has been shown that the evaluations performed by an external provider had a higher quality and subsequent positive impact on the programme implementation as compared to the internal evaluations, and the former type can therefore be recommended also for the upcoming period of time, though the evaluation specification should be prepared more carefully, well in advance and the quality of outputs rigorously maintained.

Formulation of recommendation	Level of seriousness	Time span
Preparation of evaluations and provision of evaluation capacity		
Evaluation worker will read draft regulations	Recommended	Medium-term
Improvement of evaluation capacity – evaluation worker training	Recommended	Short-term
Improvement of evaluation capacity – defining the collaboration of an evaluation worker with a subject-matter sponsor, specifically for each evaluation. The collaboration must be defined already during the formulation of specification.	Necessary	Short-term
Improve the quality of contractual documents preparation (provision of high quality author selection is key to quality evaluation provision)	Necessary	Immediately, or before the start of the next evaluation preparation
Prepare yearly evaluation plans in greater depth (especially the schedule) and add information to already completed evaluations	Recommended	Short-term
When formulating the tender conditions set the scope of evaluation in such a manner so that the evaluator is obliged, and has sufficient scope, to verify the facts concerned in the depth consistent with the asked evaluation questions.	Necessary	Immediately, or before the start of the next evaluation preparation
Increase the weight of the quality criterion (EC recommends a 70/30 ratio – quality/price) when evaluating bids. In case of a greater emphasis on the price criterion evaluation it is necessary to exactly specify requirements on the scope and outputs of evaluation.	Necessary	Immediately, or before the start of the next evaluation preparation
Evaluation management and setting		
Properly evaluate recommendations submitted in the evaluation output with regard to their justification and thoroughly consider possible effects of their application	Necessary	Immediately, or within the next evaluation
Allow scope for mutual consulting of recommendations with the author in the evaluation schedule.	Recommended	Immediately, or within the next evaluation
In respect to presentation of the conclusions and recommendations resulting from evaluations to senior management or the public/media, preparation of a managerial summary may be considered, which will form a concise and complete text well-suited for such purposes.	To be considered	Immediately, or within the next evaluation

Note: Level of seriousness necessary - recommended – to be considered; Time span: immediately – short-term (quarter of a year), medium-term (1 year), long-term – mainly by 2014+